

Delaware Office of Highway Safety and Department of Transportation Launch Pedestrian Safety Education Campaign

Realistic Walk Smart pedestrian crash demonstration shows life-or-death necessity of slowing down

(WILMINGTON, REHOBOTH BEACH) DE – Delaware’s pedestrian safety education campaign kicked off this week with demonstrations of the effects of speed on pedestrian safety in New Castle County and Sussex County. The “Walk Smart” campaign, a collaborative effort between the Office of Highway Safety (OHS), the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), and state and local law enforcement with other partners, is meant to educate the public about safe walking and crossing practices to improve safety on the road. The campaign comes at a significant time as May has trended as highest for pedestrian crashes in Delaware.

“Speed is one factor that is almost always the difference between life and death when it comes to pedestrian crashes,” said Jana Simpler, Director of the Delaware Office of Highway Safety, which is coordinating the Walk Smart campaign with DelDOT.

“Even one pedestrian crash on our roadways is too many, and we are working hard to create strategies to eliminate these crashes,” Simpler said at the kick-off events. “Although quite simple, this message is vitally important.”

To drive home this point, the events included a demonstration of vehicle stopping time and distance, featuring a wire-frame model of a child crossing the street. At 25 mph, the vehicle stops in time. At 35 mph, the car slams into the model with devastating force.

“The lesson here is clear,” said Adam Weiser, DelDOT Safety Programs Manager. “If a pedestrian is struck by a car going 25 mph or slower, the odds of survival are good. At speeds above 35 mph, the impact is likely to be fatal.”

Every eight minutes a pedestrian or cyclist is injured on our nation’s roadways. From 2012-2013, 754 reportable pedestrian crashes occurred on Delaware’s roadways; 75 percent occurred in New Castle County with most in the Wilmington area. Sussex County has also experienced an increase in pedestrian crashes. There were 20 pedestrian-related crashes along Route 1 from Lewes to Fenwick Island from 2011-2013.

“The vast majority of these crashes can be prevented if drivers reduce their speed and pedestrians use care along roadways. Educating the public about pedestrian fatalities and how to prevent them will certainly help save lives and make our roads safer,” said Lewis D. Schiliro, Secretary of the Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security.

In an effort to combat these statistics, the Walk Smart campaign involves a combination of law enforcement stopping violators and educating them about safe walking and crossing practices and public awareness activities. OHS and DelDOT along with state and local police departments will conduct pedestrian safety patrols—along roadways with high pedestrian crashes. The agencies will distribute pedestrian safety informational materials that highlight safe pedestrian practices along with reflective items with the “Walk Smart” message.

“Troopers will continue to emphasize and bring awareness that

pedestrian crashes often result in deadly consequences,” said Sergeant Paul G. Shavack, Director of Public Information for the Delaware State Police. “The key to stopping these predictable and preventable incidents from occurring is through education and targeted enforcement for the safety of both pedestrians and motorists. Troopers will focus enforcement efforts on pedestrians who are crossing at areas other than designated crosswalks, walking along a roadway when a sidewalk is available, as well as motorists who fail to obey laws designed to ensure pedestrian safety.”

In an effort to further enhance the Walk Smart campaign, Christiana Care and Beebe Healthcare have joined forces to provide education about the devastating effects of pedestrian crashes.

“At Christiana Care, we all too often are called upon to provide emergency care for our neighbors who are injured while they are walking,” said Glen Tinkoff, M.D., associate vice chair of surgery for emergency surgical services at Christiana Care Health System, which includes Delaware’s only level one adult trauma center, at Christiana Hospital. “We welcome this opportunity to partner with our state leaders to educate the public about pedestrian safety through Walk Smart.”

Pictures and video of the demonstration can be found on OHS YouTube and Facebook pages. To learn more about the campaign, visit <http://ohs.delaware.gov/PedestrianSafety>.

YouTube: <http://youtu.be/4blq-Q-fwPM>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ArriveAliveDE